

# The Desert

## TO THE TRUE AMERICAN.

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VOL. I

### RETRIBUTION;

A TALE.

(Concluded from No. 17.)

"Presumptuous and ungrateful boy—  
Banished forever from my esteem, seek  
your future fortune in the wide world,  
on which you have thrown yourself. In-  
gratitude is your crime; a greater exists  
not; and you have no other way to as-  
suage the throbs of reflection than to for-  
get the name of—*Davenport*."

Mr. Sydney's attention had been fixed  
upon Edward during the time of his read-  
ing the cruel mandate, and with concern  
he now beheld him tear the hateful scroll,  
and, with wildness in his look and man-  
ner, hasten towards the house, as he said,  
(when withheld by Mr. Sydney) "to as-  
sert his innocence, and confront his ac-  
cusers."

"Alas! my child," interrupted Syd-  
ney, "they could not stand before you.  
And as to your innocence, depend on it  
Mr. Davenport does not, dares not, doubt  
it. These unavailing starts of passion are  
unworthy of Edward Moreland. Time,  
my young friend, I am persuaded will  
meliorate its perspective, which is not so  
desolate as you imagine. Cease to view  
it with the jaundiced eye of disappoint-  
ment, and the rays of hope will dissipate,  
by insensible degrees, the gloom which at  
present pervades the prospect."

"It is my firm resolve," continued the  
venerable man, "to leave, in a very few  
weeks, this mansion for ever. My reli-  
gion forbids me to yield to the dictates of  
pride or resentment; but it justifies my  
attending to the call of independence.  
Swayed by friendship for the great and  
good man whose adopted child you are,  
I left, at his request, my little dwelling in  
Downing Vale, to attend to your educa-  
tion. The task delighted me, and I glori-  
ed in your rapid improvements. I dis-  
pute not Mr. Davenport's right to forbid  
my interfering in a subject like the pre-  
sent, between himself and his daughter;  
but Sophia Moreland is amiable, and I  
ventured to plead her cause with an ear-  
nestness that gave offence. I repent not

of my zeal; my motives were those of  
humanity; and if Mr. Davenport has for-  
got the manners of a gentleman, I trust I  
have not lost sight of the duties of a Chris-  
tian minister. I have only to entreat you  
to consider me as your second foster-fa-  
ther, and to make my lowly but comfort-  
able dwelling your future home, for your's  
it will be, with all that pertains to it,  
when it pleases heaven to take me from  
you."

The parties held mutual converse till  
they entered the house.—Mr. Davenport  
was in the hall, giving some directions to  
one of the domestics, as they passed through  
it. He glanced a look of displeasure to-  
wards Edward; but Edward viewed the  
father of Sophia, and, in spite of his  
wrongs, returned another blended with  
regret and pity.

Edward returned to his chamber, where  
he was soon joined by Mr. Sydney. An  
early hour for their departure to Down-  
ing Vale was fixed on, and as the setting  
sun illumined its flower-clad porch, they  
found themselves seated therein.

Their arrival was welcomed by the pea-  
santry, and Edward witnessed in their art-  
less expressions on the occasion, the high  
veneration they entertained for their aged  
pastor.

To his own heart, Davenport in vain  
endeavoured to acquit himself; but the  
error he could not justify he persevered  
in; he meanly sought another interview  
with Lord Belford, who with equal mean-  
ness reconciled himself to an union, could  
it be effected, with a young creature who  
he was convinced held him in abhorrence.

Sophia continued firm in her resolve  
never to wed but with her parents' con-  
sent, and never to be made a sacrifice  
against her own.—Still preparations on  
the part of her father were making for an  
event he seemed determined on; and  
with a rapidity which alarmed her; when  
letters, announcing the sudden death of  
his Lordship's only brother, who resided  
at a considerable distance, relieved her  
for some time from farther persecution.

In the neighbourhood of Davenport  
Park resided Augusta Villeroy and her  
widowed mother, from whose cheek the  
rose of beauty had been driven by men-

tal affliction; but its lily still remained.  
Augusta and Sophia were bosom friends.  
Mrs. Villeroy, who had not yet passed  
her fortieth year, had lately retired to  
Holmwood Hermitage, to indulge, amidst  
its surrounding labyrinths, a rooted sor-  
row, which it was not in the power of  
time to obliterate.

Colonel Villeroy lost his life in the ser-  
vice of a country, which could boast  
of but few like him, and of a king who  
owned not a subject more loyal, or a sol-  
dier more brave. At a very early period,  
the colonel and his lady were united, and  
a pair more affectionate and better suited  
to each other never approached to ex-  
change mutual vows at the sacred altar.

Within a month after his marriage,  
Villeroy was summoned to the field, and,  
at the close of his twenty-third summer,  
fell in the bloom of health, in the prime of  
manhood, and in the moment of victory!

The countenance of Augusta presented  
a softened likeness of her father; and this  
consoling circumstance acted as a balm  
upon the sorrows of Mrs. Villeroy. Many  
years had passed away since his untimely  
fall; yet faithful memory still retained  
his unfading picture.

Augusta's disposition was amiable; the  
indulgence she had uniformly experienced  
from her disconsolate parent, had improv-  
ed the excellent qualities of which it was  
composed, and the soothing attention of  
such a child proved doubly grateful.

To the keeping of Augusta, the heroine  
of these pages consigned the important  
secret of her unalterable love for the un-  
offending youth, who, from infancy to  
the moment of his banishment from  
Moreland Park, she had been taught to  
consider with affection and regard.

The favourite retreat of the young friends  
was in one of the numerous apartments,  
still remaining in different states of deso-  
lation, of a monastery, which had long  
since fallen to decay. The melancholy  
appearance of the ruin was increased by  
the high trees which encircled its time-  
worn walls and tottering towers. A deep  
and silent water, overshadowed by the  
branching oak, gave a solemnity to the  
spot, which kept the country vulgar at an  
awful distance. Reports had for ages



prevailed that, on its secluded and silent margin, the shades of the former inhabitants of the monastery took their nightly round, and that frequently were heard sighs and groans, which were supposed to proceed from these unquiet spirits, as the bird of morning warned them to their separate confines.

The way to the room they had chosen was intricate and gloomy, it was the last of a long suite, which, from deep recesses in the walls, appeared to have been appropriated to study or to slumber, most probably the latter, for surely in the whole catalogue of phrases, none more justly applied than that of

—a dreaming monk.

The size of this gloomy chamber was immense, a window of suitable dimension, and still entire, at its termination, admitted a doubtful light: the subject on the painted glass, presented to the eye one of those legends of superstition calculated to nurse the delirium which degraded its votaries. Folding doors opened to what appeared to have been the principal staircase, now decayed and impassible; on which account Sophia and her companion were obliged to ascend the winding steps of a small tower, which gave them entrance to the chambers above mentioned, and only by this means could they arrive at the seat of converse and occasional contemplation. Under the care of masters who preside over the different elegancies of female education, Augusta's acquirements were such as would have graced the highest circles in society. The sounds of the harp, from the height and extent of the apartment in the ruin, were rendered still more melodious, and on this instrument, which Augusta touched with a scientific and fine finger, the hours of evening were beguiled while the harmony was still heightened by the vocal aid of Sophia.

The evening rambles of Sophia and Augusta were now discontinued from a cause the most distressing. Mrs. Villeroy's depression of spirits had, for some time, been undermining a very delicate constitution, and the unfortunate lady now took to her chamber, which her physician gave but little hopes of her ever leaving with life.

During her illness, her widowed sister attended the hasty summons of Augusta; but Mrs. James arrived only time enough to receive her last injunctions, which were, to take upon her the cares of a mother, and watch over the welfare of a much loved child.

And never were the injunctions of the dying more feelingly attended to, or more religiously observed; Augusta's affection

for her aunt yielded only to that her parent had claimed through life, and in every situation had uniformly experienced.

After an absence of six months, lord Belford returned, leaving his brother's ashes to repose with those of his ancestors; and Mr. Davenport became more than ever intent on an alliance which promised so many advantages.

Filled with the idea of future grandeur, he took the earliest opportunity of waiting on Belford; but the reception he experienced acted as a check to his ambitious hopes. The deportment of the peer was haughty, not to say contemptuous, and in a few words Davenport was given to understand, that after his daughter's insulting preference, his lordship could not think of submitting to still deeper degradation.

To add to the chagrin and disappointment of Davenport, he received from the banished Edward the following letter:

"I remembered the benevolent and revered man, whose loss I am doomed doubly to mourn; I remembered too, the amiable lady who honoured you with the title of husband:—when such remembrances pressed upon a heart, bleeding for its irreparable loss, it is no wonder I sought the solitude chosen by the lovely, and I will dare to add, beloved Sophia, who mourned the same objects, and whose regrets were congenial to my own. In the tender moment of reciprocal sorrow, heaven heard our vows, which were mingled with prayers for its protection. That protection will not be withheld; Sophia has bestowed herself on one who holds the gift too dear to relinquish it.

"In an engagement with the enemy, I have fought under a gallant and victorious general; I am honoured with his friendship: and I can no longer feel the obscurity of my birth, when, in the brave Lynmore, I have a second time experienced an honourable adoption.

"The injured EDWARD."

The letter of Edward arrived at a time the most unfavourable. Though stung to the quick by the arrogance of lord Belford, Davenport was still willing to hope the best, and to wait a return of that passion which the peer had once cherished, and which he still flattered himself would be productive of future wealth and honor.

But while Davenport was raising his airy castles, and in fond idea basking in the sunshine of court favour, a circumstance took place which overwhelmed him with dismay, and entirely frustrated every expectation so lately raised, and now so completely overthrown.

The failure of a banking-house in the city, where he had placed a considerable part of his property, required his attention. In a state of extreme perturbation, he hastened to the metropolis, repaired to —, and found at least two-thirds of his worldly wealth involved in the common ruin.

During the absence of her father, Sophia's situation may truly be termed a melancholy one. The family consisted of a few servants and the house-keeper and her daughter.

The spirits of Miss Villeroy were not in a state to admit of that young lady's leaving the house, and indeed their extreme depression had brought on an indisposition which required a temporary confinement; and Sophia could only see and converse with her friend occasionally.

Mrs. Welling, the house-keeper, as well as her "Betsey," as she called her, was very attentive to her young mistress, till it was rumoured about the neighbourhood, that most probably Mr. Davenport was in a state of bankruptcy.

Mrs. Welling had lived in the family about twenty years, and during their course had done her duty, at least she thought so; the good woman had received for nineteen of these same years, more clothes, by way of gift, than she could ever wear out; and on every Christmas day (the anniversary of her coming into the family) a piece of thin paper, denominated a bank note, for the sum of thirty pounds.

But another time of payment was coming round, and therefore the good woman was naturally much alarmed, and very prudently expressed her determination among the inferiors in the kitchen, to "make a demand while it could be answered, and while she could move off in good shoes." In saying this, who can blame Mrs. Welling, when it is made known that the cautious creature had an utter detestation to everything like distress, from the time that Mr. Davenport's benevolent mother relieved her from its most abject state.

Downing Vale, the abode of the venerable Sydney, was that of innocence and tranquility. His daughter had been a widow for many years, and, on the death of her husband, returned again to superintend her father's household. Mrs. Woodland had never known the blessing of a child, and, in her thirty-second year, was left a widow in independent circumstances, so that, by an union of property, the wolf was effectually kept from the door of Sydney's dwelling-place; where charity held her seat, and invited the way



worn passenger, whom poverty had marked for her own, to comfortable fare and a clean pallet.

The misfortune which had befallen the father of Sophia was at length made known to Mr. Sydney, who fearful lest other tongues might bear the tale too unguardedly, waited himself on Sophia with the heart-rending intelligence.

While this mutual friend of her father and herself was disenclosing, in a manner the most delicate and tender, the mournful truth, a letter arrived from Mr. Davenport; Sophia begged permission to peruse it, but scarcely had she cast her eyes on its contents, than she said to Mr. Sydney—"The dreadful whole is here unfolded! I am truly wretched!"—"Wretched," rejoined Mr. Sydney, "nay, not so, my dear; your father's loss is but a partial one, and the laying down carriages, and the dismissal of a few useless servants, will not entirely deprive you of happiness."—"Merciful heaven! I bend beneath thy chastisements," exclaimed Sophia; then turning towards Sydney, she requested he would read her father's letter, and suffer her to retire.

"It is my wish you should retire," returned the worthy man; "but do not send me away, my love, till I see you again; suffer me to wait your return." Sophia pressed the hand of Sydney, saying, I will return to my only comforter," and left the room.

The letter lay upon the table—Mr. Sydney took it up—shuddered at its alarming purport—and admired the fortitude of Sophia.—Its contents were:

"Sophia,

"Thy father is obliged to hide his devoted head! distracted at the loss of the better half of his fortune by the failure of the —s, he has rashly aimed at retrieving it at the gaming table, and is completely beggared. Davenport."

While Mr. Sydney was ruminating on what was to be done, Sophia returned; and advancing to her revered friend, informed him that she was determined to look up to him for counsel, and act entirely by his directions. "Then" replied Sydney, "you shall instantly be to me as another daughter. The gallant Edward is at this moment on English ground: we will find out thy unfortunate father, get him to consent to thy union with that noble youth and be happy yet, Sophy, or old Sydney has no skill in divination." On their approaching Downing Vale they were met by Mrs. Woodland, who returned with them to the house, and the hours till bed-time passed with tolerable tranquillity, for, be it remembered, they were the children of virtue and of innocence.

The following day Mr. Sydney was informed that certain strangers had taken possession of Davenport Park, to the great discomfiture of Mrs. Welling and her "daughter Betsey."

Miss Davenport had been a few days under the care of the benevolent Sydney, when one evening she set out on a visit to Augusta, who was much recovered from her late indisposition. On her return she passed the ruin! The evening was serene and beautiful; the bold shadows of the majestic building were reflected on the smooth and pellucid surface of the stream which wound along its pensive and romantic borders. The venerable appearance of the ancient trees which overhung its moss-grown towers, filled her mind with that secret awe for which language has no name. She passed at the door she had so frequently entered, in company with her Augusta. She ascended, instinctively, the winding staircase—passed thro' the long and dreary range of apartments; at length she found herself in the spacious and gloomy chamber before described. Her heart was full, almost to bursting! The music book lay open—the harp was near it—she touched the strings to the presented subject—it accorded with the melancholy it soothed—her fingers quitted the strings, and the vibration imperceptibly died away. The shades of evening warned her to depart: still she seemed unwilling to quit the spot. In mournful musing she sat, intently gazing on Augusta's favourite object, the painted window, when, to her inexpressible alarm, she heard a low and deep voice pronounce, "Now perform your office!"

In an instant the terrified Sophia was seized by two of lord Belford's domestics; a third and a fourth advanced with poniards, and threatened instant death if she offered to raise the least alarm. As the ruffians bore her through the third chamber, their vile employer presented himself, and in an exulting tone exclaimed, "Now, lady, it is my turn to insult; but it is still in your power to lead me as you will: you have only to forget a father no longer able to protect you, and yield your lovely person to the embraces of your adoring Belford." Sophia appearing roused above the sense of her danger, was preparing to reply, when Belford interrupted, "Nay, my pretty beggar, play off no airs, for willing or not, by all the powers of love, this night makes you mine. It depends on yourself to merit my protection when passion subsides; beware, then, and tremble to awake the vengeance which, on your resistance, will not fail to consign you to dishonour, disgrace, and poverty."

Happily for Sophia, indignation, at this threatening moment, triumphed over fear; and darting a severe and reproving glance at the titled spoiler, in an exalted tone she pronounced, "Reptile and wretch!"—"Reptile and wretch!—enough. Now fellows you have the means to silence the tongue of insolence; apply it, and with your charge follow your lord." The creatures of Belford now proceeded to apply the instrument of silence, when the clashing of swords, followed by a groan, were heard in the next room.

The peer started, and running to the door, his farther passage was opposed by the command of Edward!—His lordship instantly drew, but in a second pass was disarmed by his opponent, who spurned him from him, repeating, "Reptile and wretch! and hear it, not as the voice of insolence, but of truth, drag out your miserable existence.—I scorn to lay thee by thy fellow."

Sophia, at the sight of Edward, uttered a convulsive scream, and was borne in a state of insensibility to Holmwood Hermitage. Reviving, she found herself in the arms of Edward, who that evening had arrived at Davenport Park; where he heard of the misfortune of its late owner. Proceeding from thence to Downing Vale, he was met by his affectionate tutor, to whom he introduced General Lynmore. Sophia became the object of immediate inquiry, and in a few words Sydney explained the cause of her removal from the park to his own protecting mansion, adding, "I am now on my way to meet her on her return from Miss Villeroy."

Passing the abbey, they observed lord Belford conferring with a domestic at the gate of the tower, and enter the building with him, a circumstance which excited their curiosity, the more so, when Sydney observed that one of its apartments was occasionally visited by Sophia and Augusta.

This notice was inducement sufficient: they followed the steps of Belford, and the consequence has been already related.

Downing Vale would not have been the seat of perfect happiness, but for the uncertainty which hung over the fortunes of Davenport.—To restore him to society, and to rescue him from destruction, became the generous task of Lynmore and Edward, and they were on the point of proceeding to London on their inquiry, when an old man of a decent appearance presented himself at the garden gate, and requested an interview with Sophia. On his being introduced, he informed Sophia that at his cottage Davenport remained concealed, and wished to see her.

Two short miles brought the party to a neat and secluded habitation; where they found, pale and emaciated, the despairing Davenport. On entering the room, Sophia rushed into his embrace, while Davenport could only pronounce, "My child! my child! can you forgive me?"

Sophia repeatedly embraced her disconsolate parent; assured him of her forgiveness; while the brave veteran Lynmore bade him take comfort, and command his fortune, which should at least restore him to the possession of Davenport Park."

The cottager, who was distinguished by the name of *Old Clement the Hermit*, had the pre-



feeding night opened his door to Davenport, who requested a hiding place, for a few days, in a spot the most likely to conceal him; and where he could have the satisfaction of seeing his child before he left her for ever; but now he was prevailed upon to be the guest of Sydney; and again he became attached to life and its better prospects.

The General was not a man to linger in the performance of a promise; Edward's happiness was his prompter; and in a few weeks Mr. and Miss Davenport were reinstated in the mansion they had so suddenly deserted, and among the domestics none were more loud in expressions of satisfaction than Mrs. Welling and her "daughter Betsey."

The union of Edward and Sophia became the next consideration, and preparations for that event were in great forwardness, when, one morning, while the party were engaged in conversation on the subject, a messenger arrived from Old Clement the Hermit, who lay at the point of death, and who, before he breathed his last, wished to impart a secret of the utmost importance to Lynmore, in the presence of Sydney, Edward, and Sophia.

"Was not your residence, sir, at the time of your marriage, at Lynmore Hall?" He was answered in the affirmative. "The fruit of your union a son?" The General, upon this, cried out in agony; "Be brief! what of my boy? what of my long lost child?" Clement pointing to Edward, feebly answered, "Behold him there," and instantly expired.

"Merciful Heaven!" exclaimed Lynmore, "his lips are closed for ever: but no matter. Come my boy, my Edward; come to thy father's arms; and heaven, in its own time, will reveal what is now hidden."

The attendant at the cottage then informed them that Clement had been seized with death on the morning of that day; and conscious of his approaching dissolution, had commissioned a neighbour to repair instantly to the General, to whom he wished to deliver a written confession, and render all the restitution in the power of a robber and a murderer! "In a small chest in the next room," continued the attendant, "I observed him (on the last evening) deposit a sealed paper, there, Sir, is the key."

On opening the chest a sealed paper was found, directed *To General Lynmore. The confession of William Clement, commonly called Clement the hermit.*

"From a dread of punishment for former crimes I have lived a life of fear and misery. Too idle, in my youth, to gain my bread by honest labour, I broke the hearts of my parents, and quitted the employment they had placed me in, and joined some wandering beggars who would, often as opportunity offered, where entreaty failed, apply to force. To a female of the gang I attached myself. At this time you resided at Lynmore Hall, where great

rejoicings were made at the christenings of your son, who that night was stolen from his cradle. Many articles of value were likewise taken away at the same time. With so rich a prize we agreed to quit our companions, and live on the produce of our plunder; we soon saw it out, and returned to our old courses.

"About a twelvemonth after the transaction at Lynmore Hall, we were overtaken by a night storm, and sought shelter in Moreland Wood, where we remained till the evening of the following day, when my dissolute companion took occasion to pick a quarrel, and in her passion assailed me with a broken flint. It was my misfortune to snatch up its counterpart, with which I struck her in the forehead and killed her on the spot; as she fell she gave a faint shriek, and hearing a gate open, and the sound of voices, I betook myself to flight.

"In a distant part of the country I entered into the service of a farmer;—my attention pleased him, and I had not been many months in his service before he gave me with his daughter a share in the farm.

"In a few years I buried my father-in-law, and my wife did not long survive him. Ill health at length induced me to sell my farm, and many a year being passed and gone since the death of my wretched comrade in Moreland Wood, and being desirous of hearing what became of the infant, I trusted to an entirely altered appearance in garb as well as person, and hired an apartment at a gardener's in the neighbourhood; where I often sate to hear my own story told, and experienced a comfort in finding your son was so well provided for.

"Some years previous to the death of Sir Robert Moreland, I quitted the neighbourhood, and engaged myself in the service of a gentleman, with whom I went to Lisbon, where I was honoured with the esteem of my master. My inducement to return to England was to be near General Lynmore, and if I could summon up resolution, to tell him his son yet lived, and was worthy of his name. Mr. Amwell had long ceased to consider me as a servant; and could I have quieted my conscience on a former account, I had been happy; but, alas, Sir, that, could not be! On my return to England, I again sought intelligence of the child, of which I had the cruelty to deprive you. I heard with dismay, of the unworthy treatment he had experienced from Mr. Davenport, and which eventually led him to his brave and gallant father. No more—I have lived to see him triumph o-

ver his enemies. This paper will soon clear every mystery, and may blessings temporal and eternal be his portion."

The General, who had attempted to read this confession, finding himself unequal to the task, had consigned it to Mr. Sydney. For a space all was impressive silence. Lynmore at length arose, Edward appeared to watch the moment, they rushed to a mutual embrace, and both kneeling, the transported father exclaimed, "Behold my son, my own George Lynmore, no longer my adopted, but my real, my restored child."—"Rise not yet," interrupted Sydney. "This is the work of heaven!" It was a summons instantly obeyed, while the reverend "champion of his God" poured forth the effusions of prayer and praise to the author of felicity.

On their return to Mr. Davenport, that gentleman retired with Mr. Sydney. The important and unlooked-for event filled the father of Sophia with confusion; and he expressed his contrition in terms the most humiliating for his treatment of young Lynmore.

His feelings on that account were soon relieved by the General leading into the room Lynmore and Sophia, saying, "Come Davenport let the past be lost in oblivion: my fortune is amply sufficient for ourselves and our children: let us henceforth be as one family. Davenport blessed the young pair as they knelt before him; and bursting into tears of penitence and rapture, he exclaimed, "The ways of Providence are just—this is indeed RETRIBUTION."

Tranquillity restored, Mr. Sydney said to the elder Lynmore, "I find, by a few lines added to Clement's confession, that the poor of Downing Vale are to share his property. In the grateful task I shall expect the assistance of yourself and Mr. Davenport. He adds, that in the left arm of the child Lynmore, nature hath stamped a crimsoned circle." George Lynmore, presented the mark; and this proof removing every doubt, were it possible any could be admitted, nothing remained for Sydney but to perform the most pleasing part of his duty; and the day following the interment of Clement, Lynmore and Sophia were united. The blessings of the poor, and the congratulation of the affluent, attended the ceremony.

At the request of the General, the ceremony was performed at the parish church, where he again acknowledged his son in the presence of applauding hundreds. On the procession returning to the carriages, Mr. Sydney heard sounds of extreme execration against Lord Belford, he therefore made a sudden stop, and said to the surrounding multitude; "This is a day of joy and general pardon. The person whose deeds have roused your generous resentment, has, by my intercession, been pardoned at the sacred altar, by those he has most injured."

This address was succeeded by loud applause; the crowd dispersed; and no appearances of riot or confusion, interrupted the general joy which prevailed for several days around Davenport Park.